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AUGUST

VOL.
27

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CHARLES DICKENS

PART 153.

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1881.

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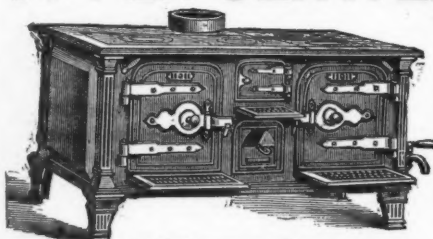
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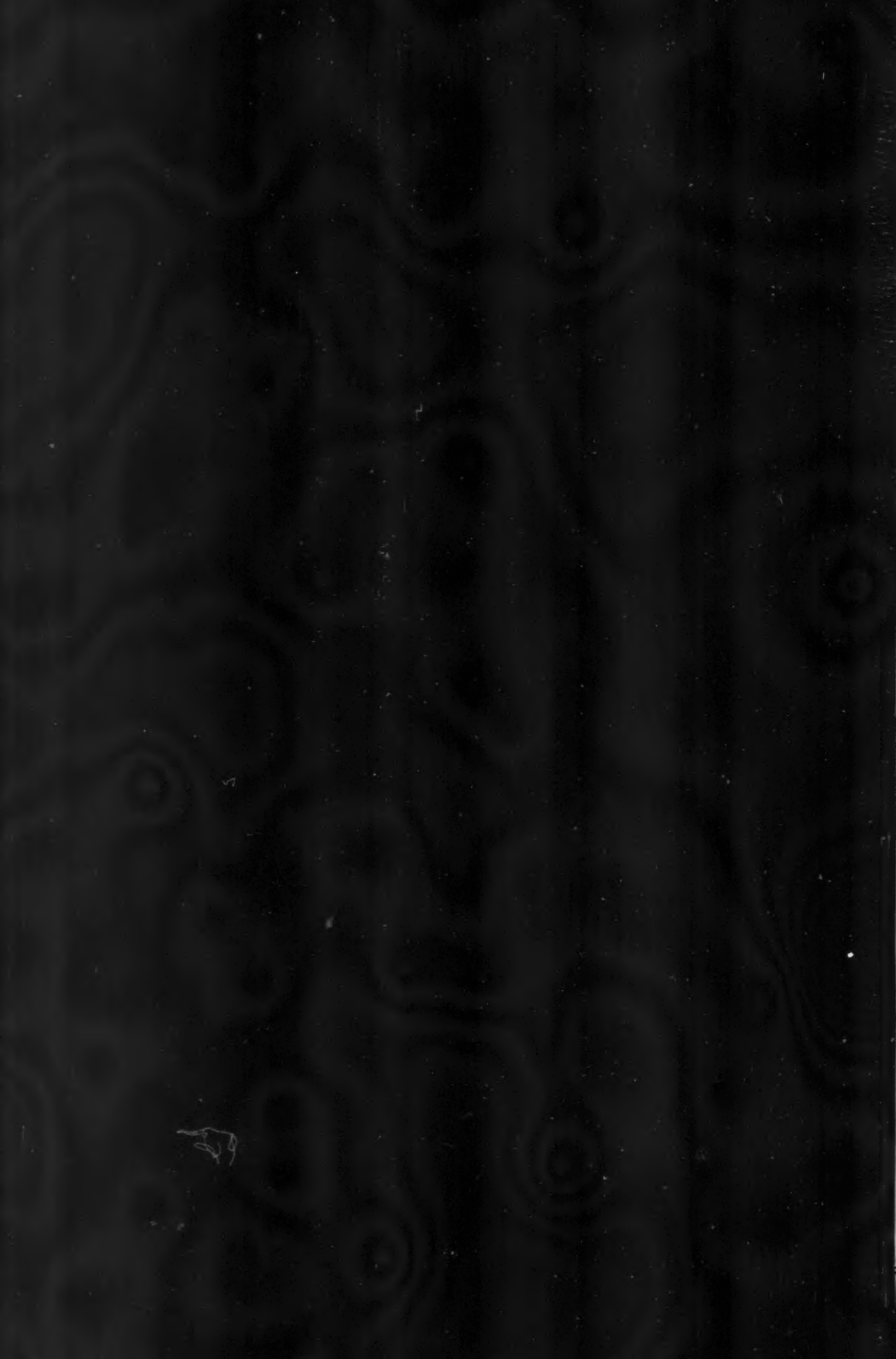
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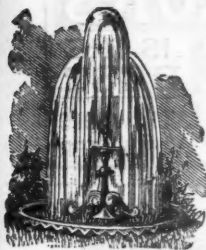
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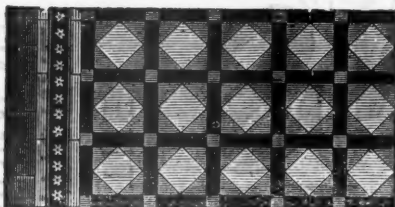
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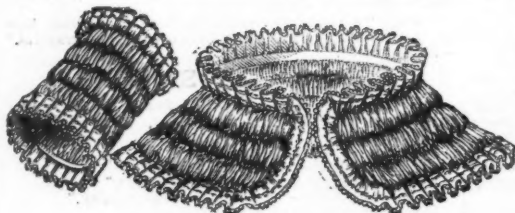
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BY R. E. FRANCILLON.

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CHAPTER I. STANISLAS ADRIANSKI.

THADDEUS of Warsaw, Lara, and all their kith and kin? Why, they were nothing at all to Him. He was Romance in person. To begin with, he was a foreigner. He was black-haired and black-browed, and he wore his hair long and his brows in a tragic frown. The drooping moustachios that hid his mouth—possibly to the advantage of the latter—were in themselves a glory. It was hard to decide whether the man owned the moustachios or the moustachios the man. True, cleanliness was neither his forte nor his foible. But interesting and romantic foreigners are privileged from the trouble and expense of soap; if one washes too much, one might as well be something in the City—a bull or a bear.

Not from the City, or from anywhere near it, came Stanislas Adrianski. He was a Pole. What Ireland is to England, such was he to the world. His nationality meant a great deal; but he was something more even than a common Pole. In war he had waved the sword, in peace he struck the lyre. He was a hero, who taught the piano at three shillings and sixpence an hour; but he was a hero, an exiled hero, all the same. With fallow face, pathetic black eyes, and long black hair, with an aroma of lost battles and of the pathos of patriotic exile about him, no wonder that he touched a chord in the heart of Phoebe Burden that had thrilled to no meaner, shorter, or cleaner fingers since she had reached the age when such chords are to

be thrilled. When he spoke English—surprisingly well considering his foreigner-ship—in his heroically melancholy way, she felt a tenderness of accent that seemed to say: "You understand me. If my country did not hold my whole heart, a considerable part of it would be yours."

She was only a sort of daughter to a lawyer's copying-clerk, an elderly widower, always with the wolf at the door; but she had a soul above circumstance, and Stanislas Adrianski had come nearest to its ideal. Everybody else was so common and so tame. There were her brothers, as she called them. She liked them well enough, but they were rough and common; even that queer lad Phil, who liked books a great deal more than she, so long as they had no poetry in them—a form of literature at which he turned up his nose. Stanislas's nose was aquiline, incapable of turning up at anything, serious, grave, and expressive of power. Phil had been known to turn up his even at Stanislas, which made Phoebe feel how easy it is for the owl to scorn the eagle. The eagle is above scorn. There were her neighbours, too; but they were nobodies, one and all.

Phoebe was not one of those girls, if such there be, who take no interest in the natural history of young men. But she was one of those who rise from the study with an incurious wonder as to what makes it attractive to other girls. She was "fond of poetry," as a certain immature phase of mind used to be described by simple people; she also believed in it; and it was a standing marvel to her how and whence poets obtained their heroes, until one memorable evening she saw Stanislas Adrianski walking up and down the next-door back garden. The snub-nosed, pimply

pert, vulgar, ignorant and silly race of young men turned out to have a reason for its existence after all. They were the waste of the raw material, the unsuccessful experiments out of which, once in a generation, Nature turns out a Stanislas Adrianski.

Phoebe had always spent a good deal of her time in that back garden. It was her nearest available approach to the picturesque and the beautiful, for the parks and the grand shops were not for every day. Not much fancy is needed to turn a dead bay-tree into a forest, a fence of broken oyster-shells into the rocks that line the edge of their native ocean, and to see distant blue or snowy hills swelling in the lines on which Mrs. Goodge, three doors off, used to hang her linen to dry. As for animal life, there were more cats behind that row of houses than in any other quarter of the globe, while, except on hot Sunday evenings, there were no young men at all. It was no doubt a kindred, sympathetic likeness in tastes and fancies that led this exceptional young man to meditate in solitude among the cats, the clothes' lines, and the oyster-shells.

We do not yet know much of Phoebe Burden. For that matter, she did not know much about herself—even a little less, if possible, than we all know about ourselves. But it is clear that a girl who knows how to conjure with oyster-shells is not likely to come across a stranger like this without feeling a touch of natural curiosity. She was not nineteen, so far as anybody could tell; and she found even less trouble in setting up nine romances in nine minutes than in bowling them down afterwards; though she found no particular trouble in that either. It did not strike her that there was any difference between inventing a non-existent hero and giving the hero's rôle to a real young man on the other side of one's own garden-wall, and that wall a low one.

"Suppose," thought she, after her neighbour, without having seemed to see her, had gone indoors; "suppose—let me see, what would be the nicest thing to suppose? Suppose I were some day all by myself in the garden—no; suppose I were looking out of the front window, when a party of soldiers, foreign soldiers they must be, of course, came marching along the street, led by a spy. I should know him by his face to be a spy. They would knock next door, and the officer and the spy would go in. I should wonder what was happening,

when, all on a sudden, I should feel my wrist grasped tightly, and, before I could cry out, I should hear an agonised whisper of 'Save me, my enemies have discovered me!' What should I do? He would have seen the soldiers and run up on to the roof and come down into ours by the chimney. No; that would make him look like a sweep; he should have, at the risk of his life, dropped from the edge of the roof to our top window-sill, and scrambled in that way. I should look round, thinking what I should do, when the soldiers would come thundering at our door. 'Search the house,' I should hear Phil saying. 'You'll find nobody here.' 'Ah! but we saw him swing himself in through the top window,' the spy would answer, and then I should hear them coming, tramp, tramp, up the stairs. 'There!' I should exclaim, pointing to the cupboard under the stairs. In he would go, and I should lean against the door, covering the keyhole and handle, so that the soldiers would never guess there was a door at all. The spy would ask me to stand forward, but I should crush him with a look of scorn. The soldiers would go, and then I should have to keep him in the house without letting anybody know. I should have to pretend to lose the key of the cupboard, and when the man came to fit a new one, I—I—I have it! I shall hamper another lock, and tell him that's the one he was sent for to mend. I shall feed the hunted hero by holding a jug of milk to the keyhole, so that he can suck it through with a straw, and I shall prevent running up the milk billany higher by going without milk in my tea. Oh! all sorts of things will happen. But one day I shall hear no answer when I speak to him. A horrible thought will come to me that he is dead. I shall break open the door, and find him—gone! How, I shall never know, but some day, twenty years afterwards, or thirty perhaps, when I had forgotten all about the whole thing, a courier would gallop up the street and pull up his horse just in front of our door. How all the street would stare! He would ask for Phoebe Burden. I shall come upstairs, yes, in my very worst gown. And then he will say, before them all: 'Thanks to you, His Royal Majesty the King of Spain'—yes, he does look like a Spaniard—'His Royal Majesty the King of Spain, while exiled from his throne, escaped from his enemies and recovered his crown. I am sent to ask you to be his queen.' And then the courier will turn out to be the king

himself, too impatient to wait for an answer ; and I shall say : ' Well, time must show, but I should like to be a queen. ' "

There was not much harm in romances which might be as reasonably hung upon the dead bay-tree as upon a stray young foreigner in a poor suburban lodging. There was no reason for suspecting him to be so much as a king's fourth cousin ; nor was Phoebe quite such a goose as to take herself in the least seriously, except in the matter of wishing to be a queen. But then it was not upon the dead bay-tree that this particular romance had been hung ; and it was with a touch of new self-consciousness that she next went out into the garden.

Of course we all know that no girl ought ever to feel the slightest interest in any strange young man, to whom she has never spoken and whom she has only once seen. Of course we know that, in good society, such things are never known to happen—that not even schoolgirls throw the most passing thought upon such things. But, alas ! Phoebe was not in good society ; she was not even a well-brought-up girl, and she had never seen a man quite like Stanislas Adrianski before.

On the other hand, no thought of his speaking to her ever entered her brain, except under purely imaginary and impossible conditions. She wanted a live hero for her own personal poems, and here was one, almost as good as if she had had him made to order.

That was the beginning, and that looked very likely to be the end, and that would have been the end, had not the interesting stranger continued to live next door. She did not make any attempt to find out his name or calling, though that might easily have been done. Perhaps she did not like to face the chances that his name might turn out to be plain John Jones, and that his calling might prove less interesting than that of exiled majesty.

How their first acquaintance came about she hardly knew. Maybe it is next to impossible for a pretty girl and a fascinating young foreigner to keep a very low garden-wall for ever between them. He never seemed to have anything to do all day but lounge about in company with a cigarette. She was nearly all day at home alone.

A first " Good morning, miss, " in such a case, is a stone set rolling down a steep hill, gathering force and swiftness out of all proportion to the first impulse that made it go.

Before long she had learned a story that set her whole heart glowing. There was romance in every syllable of such a name as Stanislas Adrianski. He was not a king. But he had a right to call himself count, if he condescended to such vanity, and he was better even than an exiled emperor ; a banished patriot, who had fought and lost for Poland. Of his unhappy country he never spoke but with tears in his eyes : of Russia, never without a heat that woke an answering warmth in Phoebe. It was something to talk with a man who had a Czar for an enemy. How he lived, considering that his estates were confiscated and that he had no ostensible calling, she did not learn. Perhaps it was by conspiracy. It did not hurt him in her esteem that her rough-tongued and would-be witty brothers, who had seen him about, called him by all sorts of contemptuous nicknames. He was above them ; and it was natural that, as British youths, they should throw stones at whatever they could not understand. Their tone added a dangerous touch of piquancy to a relation that derived half its original zest from being apart from all common things.

There was absolutely nothing to alarm her in the manner of the young man. In point of courtesy, according to her lights, it was everything that could be desired. He was evidently a count, as well as a patriot, to the backbone. Sometimes she thought that a touch of sentiment would be a not unwelcome addition to his patriotic tirades. But she never fished for it, and did not think the worse of a patriot for being above such trifles. He flattered her more by talking of himself than either he or she could tell. But the stone had not yet done rolling.

" How it is strange, " said Stanislas, one fine autumn evening, while she was taking the air on one side of the wall and he on the other. " How it is strange that I find you here ! "

" Why ? " asked Phoebe. " It is much too pleasant out of doors to stay in. "

" That is not who I mean. I mean, you are as a Princess in a history ; you are not of yours, no more as I am of England. That is strange to me. I see your father : you are not like him. I see your brothers : you are not like them. You are like yourself alone. "

" Yes—I suppose I am like myself, a little. " She coloured slightly at the new excitement of having herself made the

subject of talk instead of Poland; and she did not feel inclined to let the topic go. "But it would be strange if you knew whether I am like my father and my brothers——"

"Am I blind? No. I see them, and I see you. They are of the earth: you are of the sky."

Phoebe coloured a little more deeply; it was the nearest approach to spoken sentiment that he had ever made, and then the phrase was in itself beautiful poetry: a speech that she was proud to think had never been paid before to any girl.

"I am not of the sky—you may be sure of that," said she. "But—if I were like father, or my brothers—that would be strange."

"Pardon. That is who I do not comprehend."

"Because—because I have no father, and no mother, and no brothers—because I never had any at all."

"Ah! You mean you are not one of those?"

"I—I'm afraid—I really don't know who I am; not even my own name. I hope you, as Count, you know, won't think very much the worse of me; but it's true. You won't think it so very dreadful?"

"Dreadful? You mean terrible? No. But you interest me, more as tongue to say. I am glad you are not of those. I am glad I am right. I often say to myself: 'She is not of those.' So—you know not which you are?"

"No. I belong to a mystery. What it means I do not know."

"Confide in me. It can be I may tell. Mysteries? They are adorable. I love them; I like them very much indeed. Since Poland is slave, it is the air I breathe. A mystery—and of you!"

"I do not know who I am. . . . But, when I think of it—if I let myself think of it, and I can't help that, now and then—it makes me fancy thousands of things. . . . I have lived here all my life; but I am not Mr. Nelson's daughter, and my name is not Phoebe Nelson, but Phoebe Burden; and that is all I know."

"But they know?"

"They? Not my—brothers; and if Mr. Nelson knows, he does not tell."

"And he brings you up—he keeps you? He pays?"

"Ah, that is another mystery! Four times a year there comes a letter from India with money—for me."

Stanislas suddenly stopped in his walk,

and leaned his arms upon the top of the wall.

"Money—from India—for you? Is it much, mademoiselle?"

"A great deal. It is——"

"Hulloa! and what the devil," exclaimed a strong quick voice from behind her shoulder, "what the devil are Miss Burden's money matters to you? And what the deuce do you mean, Phoebe, by talking to fellows over the wall at this hour? Come in!"

This rough interruption, to say the least of it, came from a big broad young fellow of not much over one-and-twenty, whose approach from the back door neither Phoebe nor Stanislas had perceived. He was not handsome, though by no means of the contemptible physique which Phoebe Burden ascribed to young men at large. On the contrary, had he not been that Phil Nelson with whom, as with a real brother, she had grown up from her infancy, she might, perhaps, have regarded him with favourable distinction. As things were, she felt herself turn hot and cold with a sort of shamefaced anger, while Stanislas, in the coolest manner possible, lighted another cigarette and resumed his walk up and down. A hero of romance is not to be put out by a mere Philip Nelson.

But to be accused of talking to fellows over a wall, when one is really giving one's confidences to the sympathetic soul of a patriot, martyr, and hero, is like having one's higher life suddenly degraded and vulgarised. Phoebe turned with a temporary submission to Philip Nelson's rough command; but it was from a wish to save her hero from rough insult which might too sorely wound his sensitive soul—certainly not from any intention of submitting hereafter.

"Phoebe," said Philip more gently, "I am your brother, you know, and it's my duty to look after you. What does this mean?"

She looked through the deepening twilight across the wall, and saw the light at the point of the cigarette vanishing into the house to which the back garden over the wall belonged.

"What does what mean?" she asked quickly. "What do you mean by insulting a gentleman before me, and me before him?"

"I didn't mean to listen, Phoebe—I didn't listen; but I couldn't help hearing. I'd come back to tell you of some good news for myself, thinking you might care

—but never mind that now—and it wasn't good to find you talking, like to an old friend, to that foreign cad next door. How long have you known him, Phoebe? I've a right to know, and if I hav'n't—"

"You hav'n't," said she; "and a count—"

"A count! Every bagman's a count, abroad. And I don't believe that fellow's even a bagman."

"I know him. He is a Polish patriot, if you know what that means. He is a hero, and I am proud—"

"Hero enough! He seemed to know, from the way he sneaked off without a word, that my toes felt uncommonly like kicking— A Pole, is he?—and a patriot?—and a count?—and a hero? Oh Phoebe, if this happens twice, a Pole, and a patriot, and a count, and a hero, and a cad, and a coward, will have to learn what a common English fist means. There—once for all—come in!"

It may be thought that Philip Nelson spoke with more than a brother's ill-temper, and if he thought that the way to make short work of Stanislas Adrianski, it is certain that he was a fool.

IN THE SUNNY RHINELAND.

IV.

LET nobody say that the Germans are deficient in imagination. I may have said as much myself—at any rate, have thought it. From this moment I retract and renounce any such heresy. Not, indeed, at the sight of the long crowded table, with its flowers and fruits, its spotless napery, glittering silver, and many-coloured glass. All that is common to the civilised world. It is remembered in the bill. No, it is not till the soup and fish have passed away—it shows the innate mediævalism of the Teutonic mind that carp are held in esteem, and most fresh-water fish consumed as dainties, and all without the disguise of an elaborate cookery—it is not till the lighter articles of the menu make their appearance that one recognises the force and originality displayed. A morsel of raw Westphalian ham is not out of place at any time, even in the middle of dinner, if the dread of trichinosis could be laid aside; but to accompany it with salted cucumbers, preserved cherries, and a slice of pickled herring raises a feeling of admiration for the intellect that designed such a mixture. Again, the appearance of something in the shape of

what old-fashioned people call a "trifle"—something frothy and creamy, with little cakes stuck about it—coming long before the "roast," strikes one as toothsome, but premature; but the discovery of little crabs disporting in the cream justifies the pertinency of the dish. It is a dish that may be both rich and rare. The difficulty is to dispose of it genteelly, though it is no difficulty at all to my neighbour, the over-lieutenant Von Herzog—I find his name out from the waiter subsequently—who extracts the vital juices of the crab from their shelly labyrinth with a dexterity worthy of the octopus, and that without a spot upon his snowy facings or resplendent gold-lace, while all the time he discourses softly with the pretty cousin on the other side, as softly, that is, as compatible with being heard at all, for a perfect Babel of voices accompanies the clatter of plates and knives and the tramp of the waiters as they march in, militarywise, in double file, with fresh dishes. The Germans are not a talkative race. They acknowledge the virtues of the golden silence, beloved of those who would have none speak but themselves. But the sight of dinner seems to open the hearts and unlock the voices of all. Even the strident tones of the Americans are lost in the general clamour. The bright eyes of the poet twinkle as he gazes keenly around, but he does not venture upon a remark; only the girls sometimes look appealingly to their brother as some unknown dish is presented to them.

"Look here!" cries that youth in answer to one of these enquiring glances, "this is the regular Yewropean banquet, girls, and you've got to get through with it."

And they did get through it bravely. Much better than an English family opposite, who shared the fate of Tantalus, or of Governor Sancho, and found in all the array of dishes nothing that fate allowed them to eat.

"Rich!" cried the head of the family over the soup. It was not very rich either, but owed a spurious appearance of generosity to tapioca I fancy. He detected "butter" in some other dish; a third was rejected as "greasy;" a fourth as "acid."

The family dined apparently upon bread and potatoes and a bottle or so of dry champagne. The host himself, touched by his guest's liberality on the subject of wine, came to see what was the matter.

"You not find ze dinner goot!" he cries.

"Excellent!" replies our friend.

We knew him as Mr. Mumm afterwards, thanks to our Amy's charming vein in the way of sobriquets, not on account of his reserve, for he was rather talkative and affable, but from his always calling for Mumm's champagne.

"Excellent, indeed!" he repeats. "Sehr gut; très-bon. Too good. Rich! Reich! Hey?"

The host is puzzled, and retires with a pensive expression on his face.

And here is John come to fetch me for our trip to the Zoological Gardens. The banquet has lasted longer than we thought; but when one is busy time flies. It is half-past two, but I am not going to forego the final stage of these protracted festivities—the expression is the poet's, not mine—not for all the Johnians. And I am rewarded for my perseverance. Goose and jam with salad! There is something to open the eyes of Lucullus. And the mixture is decidedly good—it is raspberry jam, and next time I eat my Michaelmas goose, and cook, as usual, forgets the apples for the sauce, I shall send out for a pot of raspberry jam, and be independent. And yet they say the Germans have no invention! Madame Reimer affirms that strongly as we walk down to the steamboat-pier by the bridge of boats.

"Invention!" she cries. "Where shall we find it among you Germans? You adopt everything from us," meaning the French. "Your Goethe is but a Gothic Rousseau, and——"

How far Madame Reimer would have gone in her heresies it is impossible to say; for at that moment we arrived at the pay-place for the bridge of boats, and conversation was interrupted by the search for coins. A small steamer was waiting at the pier, and soon put off well crowded with passengers. For some time the clouds had been threatening, and now they gathered in about us: there was a flash, a roar of thunder, and, as at a given signal, the rain poured down in torrents. We lost sight of the river banks, a lurid twilight came over the scene, rain descended in broad continuous sheets, the river frothing up to meet it. We huddled together under the soundest portions of the awning; but that was soon soaked, and a general drenching was imminent.

"Just now," said John, looking at his watch, "had my wishes been regarded, we should have been comfortably seated in church."

There was no disputing the stubborn

logic of facts; even John's wife looked at me reproachfully as a false prophet, a kind of blind guide. When, all of a sudden, the rain ceased; the clouds rolled away like a curtain that is drawn, and the sun shone out on the broad river, the green glistening banks, the white towers and slated roofs of the city, and then the steamer touched the pier and we disembarked.

It is fresh and pleasant here with green hedges, and roads well drenched with rain. No need to ask the way, everybody is streaming towards the gardens. Only, before reaching the gates, the eye is attracted by a building, over which waves the national flag, with the inscription "Panopticum."

At once Mrs. John declares for seeing the "Panopticum." The very vagueness of the title increases her curiosity. It may mean anything from a camera obscura to a natural history museum. Perhaps a little disappointment is felt when the "Panopticum" proves to be simply waxworks. But, as far as waxworks go, these are rather pleasing—the figures are well grouped, and where mechanism is introduced it is with good effect, as in the "Forty Thieves," where the thirty-ninth thief is looking out of the thirty-ninth jar; the rest are not shown, but the number written on the jar suggests expressively the unseen. The ferocious thief, as he slowly raises his head and looks out of the jar, inspires the same horror in the mind of the spectator as is felt by the panic-stricken Morgiana herself. And there is old Frederick the Great, with his shrewd crusty air, talking to Voltaire, who is taking snuff, and looks all finesse and caustic intellect. Madame Reimer is delighted with this group. "Ah, here we have the origin of German civilisation—such as it is!" she cries, and we leave her admiring while we pass on, John's wife and I, to the next. And this is capital too. "The King of Prussia after the Schlacht at Gravelotte." It is a fine word that "Schlacht," by-the-way, and suggests pitching in, and blood and slaughter generally, in a fine expressive manner. Well, the King sits resting on a hastily-improvised seat, one end of which rests on a dead French artillery-horse that seems well out of his misery, the King a little tired and feeling the weight of his years, while Von Moltke, with cold luminous face, explains the events of the day, and shows the results attained. Bismarck, in his white cavalry cap, leans on his sword and listens with stern attention. Other officers are

grouped about, and the whole scene is lit up by the lurid glare of a burning village.

"But, my dear fellow," cried Mrs. John, squeezing my arm in her excitement, "we mustn't let Madame Reimer see this. Come away, do."

"But why should she not see it?" I argue callously; "the facts of history are not to be suppressed for Madame Reimer or anybody else. If she is so sensitive, why does she come into the German land at all?"

"If you will come and sit down opposite this charming family group—Stop, it is a horrid thing, a man presented with twins. Come away, sir, and let us sit here by the Pope, he looks so nice and thin and cool."

And when we had sat down, Mrs. John began to explain how it was, with all her prejudices against the Germans, Madame Reimer had agreed to accompany her friend into their country. Her father, a cavalry officer, had been wounded and taken prisoner in one of the earlier battles of the Franco-German War, had lingered some time a captive, and died before the conclusion of peace. And it had been a promise to her mother, now dead, that she would visit the scene of her father's last hours and place a wreath upon his grave. "It sounds very sentimental, doesn't it?" cried Mrs. John; "I'm sure, although I loved poor papa very much, I never think of visiting his grave. But then, poor thing, she married unhappily, and has suffered a great deal. She is quite poor too now, but she has saved up money for this journey, only I don't mean John to let her pay a penny."

"And was the cause of suffering removed?" I ventured to ask; "in other words, was Madame Reimer a widow?"

"That is the worst of it, poor thing," whispered my companion. "She does not know. He was a spendthrift speculator who dissipated everything, and then ran off to South America, and nothing has been heard of him for years."

And then Madame Reimer herself appeared on the scene.

"My ear is burning," she cried; "I am sure somebody is talking about me. Is there anything more to see?"

Well, there is the Schreckens Kammer upstairs, the chamber of horrors—expressive word again that Schrecken—with all the usual murderers, a large proportion English; and a final tableau of a woman devoured by rats; a sight of which, the proprietor kindly notifies, he does not recommend to the weak-nerved.

"Oh let us leave this place," cried Madame Reimer; "the air of it stifles me!"

And indeed we all agreed that wax figures were a queer kind of things, that inspired a feeling of repugnance apart even from horrible associations.

Yes, it is decidedly a relief to get among the green trees again and among faces that are healthily coloured. The gardens are not the only attraction. Here is a big restaurant, announcing a concert on a grand scale; smaller ones, that can yet boast of horns and drums, and a generally brassy feeling in the air—a feeling which gathers strength as we proceed, and culminates at the gates of the Zoological Gardens, where the band of the 40th Royal Infantry is vigorously attacking the "King Wine" March. Happy land, where, instead of shutting up everything on Sunday, they let you go everywhere half-price! It is a pleasant garden, though evidently a young one. The trees have not yet attained to any size, but they everywhere afford a pleasant shade; at the present moment, indeed, they afford an anything but grateful drip, and the paths are rather sloppy, while all the seats are glistening with raindrops, and we are driven to the huge Restauration, where there is a paved terrace partly covered with glass, and thickly studded with chairs and tables. Here, under shelter, the tables are occupied by family parties, placidly sipping coffee and listening to the music. The rain has kept people away, but, as the afternoon advances and sunshine definitely gains the supremacy, the crowd thickens and the outlying chairs are filled up. The garrison contributes a fair quota, infantry officers chiefly; the cavalry, I fancy, are almost too superb for this homely kind of amusement; and great is the consumption of beer by these honest thirsty souls. A thin film of tobacco smoke hangs over the scene, forming a kind of frame through which you see the dripping trees touched here and there with sunlight, with strange beasts stretching their necks and looking out of their compounds wonderingly. Poor beasts! nobody seems to trouble to look at them, camels or dromedaries, or whatever they may be; while the band thunders forth, over the varying crowd—a sombre crowd, for even the ladies most delight in sad-coloured garments, but just tinged with crimson and gold by the presence of the men of war—that sips, and drinks, and smokes, and talks a little and listens a good deal, while the waiters, in resplendent shirt-

fronts and irreproachable dress suits, wave their white napkins and glide in and out like ministering spirits. "Too gay for Sunday," cries John. "But a little triste," sighs Madame Reimer.

In the end we go back to Cologne by tramway, through a flat fertile country out of which the city and its towers rise in a clump, like the towns in the big German toy-boxes. All is calm and still; we pick up a passenger here and there among the little clumps of houses, but the bulk of mankind has no thought of coming home just yet. They are patient and long-suffering even in their amusements, these Germans, Madame Reimer remarks. And, presently, we are among the fortifications, with grassy embasures looking enquiringly upon us; and clanking upon drawbridges over moats with green banks and dark glassy waters, touched here and there with the evening glow; then winding between loopholed walls, all in stillness and silence, till we pass under the frowning portals of a grim mediæval gateway, and then, all of a sudden, into a busy street with lamps alight, and people swarming up and down. All this gives one an idea of the peace and security once felt by those who lived in a walled town, a feeling sadly out of place in these days of big guns and far-reaching shells, when a peaceful citizen may well pray, above all things, to be delivered from strong walls and heavily-armed forts, and to be left to the sole security of his own front door and latch-key.

To-night we hold a council of war in John's rooms, and there is a general feeling of renewed animation at the decision that we move on to-morrow morning. We have enjoyed our stay, indeed, in Cologne, but we have had an uneasy consciousness of loitering on the way. And John's wife declares with fervour that henceforth she also means to travel en garçon in a feminine sense, that is, and has no mind to be shut up as if she were a sultana.

John takes all this very philosophically; for his own part he only stipulates that there shall be no confounded steam-whistle on board the steamer; otherwise he will assuredly travel by rail. The sound of that execrinating war-whoop, and what is worse, the constant apprehension of hearing it, would embitter the most dovelike spirit.

On this point, however, satisfactory evidence is forthcoming from the hotel waiter.

Those Dutch boats indeed, with a touch of national jealousy, are very noisy, uncouth kind of craft, but our own German Rhine boats are of a far more refined and cultivated order. If they whistle at all, it is with a gentle coo like that of a sucking dove; but, in a general way, they ring a mellifluous bell that is attuned—in fact attuned to correspond with the scenery, as the poet would say.

All that is satisfactory, as it is to find that a boat starts at ten next morning—not an express boat, we are not going to do the Rhine au grand galop—and that we shall have time once more to look around this ancient and poetic city.

That night, while taking my final cigar in the café, I meet with Mr. Mumm, who is delighted to have someone to talk to. He knows this country well, having been here in the early railway days, when his firm had a contract for machinery for the new lines. His impression is that in those days the cookery was better, not so "rich." For one thing, he was not so rich himself; perhaps that had something to do with it. But he was looking at their bill of fare just now, their "speizen carte" as they called it; he should call it a pizen card, for his own part—everything so rich.

They were on their way to Kreuzenach, for the saline baths which had been recommended for his wife, by easy stages up the Rhine as far as Bingen. And once at Kreuzenach, they would have a furnished villa and their own cook—a thorough English cook, who could only roast and boil, in the plainest manner, the standard joints of old England.

"And these agree with you?" I asked.

"Not at all," replied Mumm, shaking his head gloomily. "Nothing agrees with us. We are all martyrs, a family of martyrs."

And then I broached to him a plan of my own adapted for weak digestions, which is simply to eat everything you come across, the more indigestible the better, as long as there is variety: plenty of things to fight against each other, and leave the owner of the digestive organs in peace.

"That is a grand idea of yours!" cried Mumm, shaking me warmly by the hand as I finished my disquisition; "for the sake of suffering humanity you ought to make it widely known; but, for my own part—no, I have not the courage."

It is some compensation, perhaps, for being in a garrison town; or is it only an aggravation of the evil, that the stir of life

begins early in the morning, and people are turned out of bed betimes almost in spite of themselves?

You soon get used to the multitudinous bells; indeed, their chime has a soothing effect; but the shrill trumpets and resonant drums are not to be denied. And then the tramp of many feet marching as one man—a heavy-footed man he must be—each of whose steps shakes the solid earth.

Curiosity banishes sleep; it is a whole battalion marching out for morning exercise. Seen from the height of my window, it looks like a huge caterpillar crawling briskly over the ground: dark resplendent back in blue and crimson and glittering gold; the grey linen trousers of the men answer admirably for the insect's pearly stomach; and the myriad black feet that carry on the sinuous mass in such curious-looking fashion are the very moral of caterpillar feet.

For my own part, I should be very glad of a dozen or so of pairs of feet attached along the length of my frame, so that I could crawl over these rough paving-stones with less shock to the system.

I pick my way gingerly across the cathedral square towards John's hotel. No one about yet of course.

Stay, here is Madame Reimer, wrapped in a loose dust wrapper, who is going to make her morning prayer at the cathedral.

And so we creep up along the shaded side and in at the great western portal.

What a contrast with the gloom of the other night! The choir is ablaze with richly variegated light. The heights above are filled with vague sunshine, the organ pealing forth some triumphant harmony. It seems the very mercy-seat of heaven, this great Christian temple in its symmetry and calm repose, lit up with the joyous hues of morning.

"Have you forgiven them?" I ask of Madame Reimer as we leave the church together.

She gives me a quick flash in the way of a glance, as much as to say, "Is not that question a trifle impertinent?" But she replies next moment readily enough:

"You mean our enemies, I suppose; my own perhaps, those who have injured me? Yes, I shall have forgiven them when they have undone the harm they have wrought."

She drew her robe about her slight figure with an air that did not bode particularly well for those who had incurred her resentment. But we were going

to the post-office, and Madame Reimer had undertaken to be my guide. She knew the way perfectly—a turn here, a turn there; nothing could be more simple.

Simple as it was, we lost our way. It is an enchanted city this Cologne; there must be mocking sprites about that lead the feet of travellers astray. And yet it is pleasant in the streets. The boys on their way to school, loaded with books, one or two together, or in dignified isolation; the girls in little bands, less harassed evidently in the way of lessons, and with leisure for calm scrutinising glances at the strangers. Then the maids are all outside their doors polishing brass-work and generally making their dwelling-houses beautiful. And see the stout, sturdy soldier-fellows; who laugh and nod so pleasantly at the milk-white maids! Here comes a battery of artillery, guns shining as if all the maids of Cologne had been rubbing at them since daylight, and the brass trappings that flash sunshine into the eyes, and the horses sleekest and most shiny of all.

My poor, dear little Madame Reimer, it's no use clenching your fists and digging those ivory nails into those little pink palms! They are too big for you, these sturdy Teutons; let them pass on with a benison.

We come across all kinds of queer nooks in our wandering; quaint cloisters, and quaint churches, where you feel that some early saint and martyr popping out of the darksome portals, perhaps with his head under his arm, would hardly be a startling apparition; past a cool little nook where hoary stone coffins and rude curly-headed columns recall the days of the Merovings, and an almost fabulous Clovis or Chilperic; or we stumble against an old Roman tower, the Römerthurm, one of the bulwarks once of the ancient Latin colony. Everywhere is there that continuity of the historical record which makes this old city so especially interesting. But nowhere do we meet with any bad smells. The morning air, fresh and fragrant, is fresh and fragrant still wherever we roam. Old travellers used to make mild little jokes about the bad smells of Cologne; but the groundwork of the little joke is cut away—the noisome streets have disappeared. New Cologne is slightly stiff and official-looking, with its big State banks and civil and military offices, but it is undeniably cleanly and inoffensive.

We give in at last, the post-office still undiscovered; sit down exhausted in the middle of a little platz, where there is a

stall where a girl sells mineral waters, and with a glass of seltzer, and a roll from a baker's basket, we recruit exhausted nature. There is a funny circular building close by, about which people are hovering, reading notices and so on, and pacing up and down. Can that be the post-office? No, madame is sure it is not, but it is a point d'appui however. Circular building is soon recognised in Baedeker's plan; it is the courts of justice, and Glockengasse, the post-office street, can't be far off. In fact, if we can only retain our presence of mind in executing two complicated turnings, there we shall be. The evolution is successfully accomplished, we stand in the courtyard of the battered-looking post-office, the yellow post-waggons driving in and out, the drivers with their round glazed hats like Mambrino's helmet, each adorned with a prickly bush that represents perhaps a plume, and a bugle-horn slung about the shoulders, importing a dash of melodrama to the scene. There are letters for everybody as it happens. Madame Reimer has one which she slips into her pocket with a little sigh of satisfaction. I don't know why I should interest myself in Madame Reimer's correspondence, but certainly that satisfied sigh excites my curiosity; and then she is so angelically amiable on the way home—an amiability that does not conciliate one somehow, putting it to the account of that unknown correspondent. Only, as we are passing down a narrow street, madame's amiability receives a sudden check. There is a trottoir, about eighteen inches wide, the rest of the street is aggravated paving-stones. Well, on the narrow footway, comes clanking along the most superb specimen of a cavalry officer that eyes ever beheld, all green and gold and glittering steel, his head in the air, with a lofty far-away look in the steel-blue eyes; a fair-haired barbarian chief, terrible in war, no doubt, and even cranky in disposition in times of peace.

"Let us avoid this man of war," I cry, and we are on the farther side of the street before Madame Reimer knows what it is all about.

"I thought you English were pugnacious!" she said scornfully, when she saw the reason of the manoeuvre.

But his highness the count is no better pleased either; he seems to detect a touch of sarcasm in the wide berth we have given him. The eye of steely blue is clouded with anger, his fair face is flushed,

bringing out a terrible scar that stretches from brow to chin—a shrewd sabre-cut that must have brought that proud head to the dust. And yet to that face the scar was more an ornament than a disfigurement. Happily, a man can't well quarrel with you for getting out of his way, and the haughty warrior passed on, jingling his spurs furiously.

"That was a brave sabre-cut," said Madame Reimer with a sigh.

She was reconciled to me, finding that the warrior-chief was really annoyed at our behaviour.

"And now," said Madame Reimer, as we neared the gate of the hotel, "what am I to say to my dear Amy? How shall I tell her that we have been wandering about seeing everything in Cologne, and without her?"

"But she is not such a tyrant as all that!"

"Ah, my friend, you don't comprehend. She has a heart of gold, that dear Amy. At school she was my protector, for though I am the elder, she was strong and bold, and I, weak and frail as you see; but jealous to a degree. If I spoke to a schoolfellow affectionately, gloom and tears from mademoiselle. If I had not been necessary to her—I always wrote her themes; poor Amy was always a sad dunce—we should have quarrelled irrevocably. But leave it all to me."

Madame Reimer dismissed me at the gate of the hotel, and I hurried back to breakfast, for there was no time to be lost.

These German hotel-keepers thoroughly understand the art of book-keeping. You call for your bill, and, presto! it is at your side, added up and complete, and you are clever if you can pick a hole in it. Well, the bill was reasonable enough, except for one item, a flask of cognac. "My good man, I have had no flask of cognac," I exclaim indignantly. The master turns to the books; the books express a flask of cognac; hence the cognac must be paid for. "Monsieur will remember, perhaps," insinuates the waiter, "it is no doubt the flask of cognac he had upstairs in his room." I hear a suppressed giggle behind me. John and his party have just arrived to call for me on the way to the boat. "The wretched man," whispers Mrs. John audibly, "he lies in bed and drinks brandy!" Other English people at breakfast look at me critically, Mr. Mumm among the rest, with whom I have passed as a most ab-

stemious man. My character is gone, and there is no help for it. I know very well how it happened. I took brandy and seltzer one night at dinner, and they placed a flask of cognac before me, from which I took one little glass. The rest, no doubt, went to moisten the throats of thirsty waiters. Very well, let them take it as a trink-geld from me; they will get no other. I am on the right side there. The waiters recognise the fact; there is a consultation; the obnoxious item is struck out. But is my character re-established? Not a bit of it; my companions never cease to twit me with my "sleeping potions," and Mumm, when I next meet him, treats me to a warning history—kindly meant, no doubt—of men he has known, excellent fellows, and full of capacity, who have succumbed to the use of ardent spirits. "Eschew spirits," is his moral, "and stick to dry champagne."

Actually we are nearly missing one of the best sights of Cologne—the Rathhaus, or council hall, and the adjoining buildings, which we stumble upon on our way to the steamboat-pier, charmingly quaint and redolent of the civic life that was here so strongly developed once upon a time. Brave citizen heroes, half-warrior half-chapman, who could bang your bishop out of the town, storm robber strongholds, and feast joyously afterwards in your own pinnacled "Gürzenich;" an expressive word that too, which might be freely rendered "Guzzlingniche," and be applied to certain civic buildings in other lands. One would like to have lived in your days, and to have had tickets sent for your solemn feasts; when you drank health to your Emperor with three times three, and confusion to the robber crew who would levy tolls upon your wine. Well, peace to your manes, my friends, and valet.

The steamer is waiting for us at the pier, festive-looking, adorned with bunting and covered with white awnings, throwing out wreaths of fleecy vapour with a pleasing murmur. It is the Lorelei, a propitious name for the ascent of the Rhine.

We are all in high spirits at the prospect of moving on, except, perhaps, John, whose mind is burdened with the baggage, so little of it his own personal belongings, and with the charges of the people who have brought it down for him. Everybody seems to be making our way. The drover is here with his flock of young women, the poet with his brethren, several knots of English tourists, and a considerable swarm

of natives, who are bent on seeing the beauties of their own river. These, also, many of them, carry red-covered Baedekers. It is rather a comfort to think that a red-bound volume is no longer the infallible sign of the Englishman. You may also be a German, "but scarcely a Frenchman," says Madame Reimer severely. She herself carries a blue-covered "Joanne," and if M. Joanne is as good a guide to other lands as to his own France, she is not to be compassionated on her choice. Anyhow, she seems to owe a grudge to Herr Baedeker, and is lying in wait, I feel convinced, to rend him, if she catches him tripping.

The Dom looks grand from the steamer's deck, lit up by a beam of sunshine against dark stormy-looking clouds. "When shall we sit under that stately dome again, and find rest in the symmetry of its noble proportions?"

"Why, very soon, if we come back this way," remarked John's wife in a practical spirit.

"Ladies," cried the poet, leading forward the drover and his party, "let us take a parting glance at this splendid and costly pile. It is computed that it took five hundred years to build it, at an expenditure of twenty millions of dollars and a cost of five hundred human lives."

"Well," cried the drover, considerably impressed, "them's a powerful set of figures! Jossie," to his sister, "you get hold of them figures, so's to be ready with them when they're wanted. But," after a moment's reflection, "I reckon we could raise a bigger thing for the money out to home."

And then the bell gives a final tinkle, the hawsers are cast off, and we slowly surge into the stream. Farewell, Cologne!

HETTY.

A STORY.

I WISH the hoarse dog at Number Nine were a better sleeper.

He always seems to have something on his mind. He is not content to keep it there either, but must for ever be taking the moon—when there is one—into his confidence.

He is a dog who has a keen sense of his own responsibilities, too, and feels called upon to bark at every boy who whistles as he passes, and at every dog who peeps in through the various gaps in the wooden palings of his home.

So he does a good deal of barking, take it altogether, and is looked upon by the inhabitants of Paradise Place in general as a safe and sure protection against burglars and all evil-doers.

Still, when working hard at "copy," for which I know the printer's devil will be howling at my gates in the morning, I am sorry the hoarse dog is of such a conscientious disposition.

When I say "howling at my gates," I speak metaphorically. As a matter of fact, I have no gates. As a matter of fact, I have only a share in a front door. You knock three times, and that means the little, plain-looking, shabby woman in the second-floor front.

I am only a lodger, you see, in Number Eight, Paradise Place, and ours is not an aristocratic neighbourhood. Yet we have an odd sight or sound that is pleasant in its way, for all that.

I really don't think I ever saw finer *mignonette* than grows in the window of Number Twenty, over the way: and, dear me! how sweetly the perfume steals across the narrow street when the weather is still and warm.

Then there is the lark fastened outside the attic-window of Number Ten. Did ever one hear such melody as he makes when they put him out first thing of a morning? He squats on the square of turf in the bottom of his cage, presses his speckled breast to the bars—and I shut my eyes, and am back in my old country home. The furrows of the freshly-turned fields have a fresh, pungent smell. I hear my young brother (long since laid to rest in a far-off land) whistling as he comes home from his work, with our blue-eyed baby-sister toddling along by his side holding bravely on to one finger of his strong sunburnt hand. The farm-door stands open; the passage inside is pied with gently-stirring leaf-shadows from the ivy that clusters all over the old porch; and—yes—there is the mother I shall never see again, knitting in hand, peeping from the doorway at those two approaching figures—the tall stalwart lad and the blue-eyed bit of a lassie.

These are the visions I see as I listen to the lark, and hope he doesn't mind very much being doomed to live in a small wire-house and cheer us poor toilers with his song.

Yes; even Paradise Place has its pleasures. As to the stories I write—why, they are full of lords and ladies, and everything is on the most genteel scale imagin-

able. I take in a fashion-paper to study the dress of the upper circles; though on this point I am forced to admit that the artist who "does" the illustrations is a trial to me, and often astonishes me with the look of my own creations—on paper.

I am strangely, marvellously alone in the world.

The old homestead, father, mother, big brother, blue-eyed sister—all are gone.

But that is not the story I am going to tell you now.

Suffice for you to know that I am a lonely woman, grey-haired, sad-eyed; almost penniless, save for what a busy pen can earn; inclined to be querulous with the hoarse dog at Number Nine, but yet ready to bask in a ray of sunshine; thankful for the lark's song and the scent of the *mignonette*; thankful that there is work to be done, and money to be earned thereby, sufficient for my simple wants.

It seems a very small story I have to tell, but yet it had a keen interest for me at the time it happened, and I often look back upon it. I have often wondered I had the courage to do as I did, but I have never repented of what I did.

Well, just as the spring was passing into summer; just as the fresh green leaves of the trees in the People's Park, that lay within a stone's-throw of Paradise Place, were beginning to get a bit dusty, and the primroses and violets were going out of season; a pretty sight caught my eye one morning and kept me from my work longer than it ought to have done.

It was a woman's face, framed in an open window—the very one where the *mignonette*-box stood, and whence came the whiff of the many-blossomed flowers in summer.

Just now nothing was visible in this long green box except a vast crowd of tiny two-leaved plants, that might have been baby cabbages, or cress, or anything—if one hadn't known they were *mignonette*.

The upper half of the window was shaded by a shabby sort of green blind; the lower, open, framing, as I have said before, a woman's face.

The profile was towards me at first. Rather large and massive in outline, but wonderfully Madonna-like, with sleek brown hair drawn simply back and folded round a comb.

We had a pretty face or two in Paradise Place, but daintiness and neatness were not qualities common among us. But his

woman was exquisitely neat, and I could see the little snow-white collar round her throat.

Presently, still loitering at my window, she turned, and I saw her full face.

A broad, noble brow, disguised by no disfiguring fringe or touse of hair of any kind; lambent eyes, clear and steadfast; and the very sweetest smile I had ever seen before, or have ever seen since.

How did I know this?

Why, because she looked across, as I did, and smiled at me.

That moment, out burst the lark at Number Ten into a madness of trills and roulades, and somehow the sound seemed a sort of excuse for that silent greeting. Of course I returned the smile—nay, I am not sure I did not give the least bit in the world of a nod as well. Then I sat down to my desk, giving all my energies to the task of extricating a young and beautiful countess out of a tangle of most trying circumstances into which I had carefully led her the previous evening.

Somehow the face at the window opposite seemed a sort of inspiration. Never had my thoughts flowed in a clearer stream; never had the agony of a suffering heroine piled up more thrillingly; never had the inevitable "happy ending" foreshadowed itself so delightfully.

I began to weave a romance in my own mind round that Madonna-faced woman. The countess was safely landed on the matrimonial shore after her struggles through the waters of affliction, so I could afford to be idle a bit.

If kept waiting for "copy," the printer's devil was apt to scandalise the neighbourhood (which, though poor, was eminently respectable) by singing low songs and whistling in an impudent and distracting manner, hanging himself on to the area-rails in impossible attitudes the while; but to-day his bundle of MS. was ready long before he appeared—a state of affairs that I am perfectly sure disappointed him extremely as curtailing his opportunities of harrying the little world of Paradise Place.

There was no more "copy" due for nearly a week to come.

I would be idle for a while; I would stroll into that park of which we were all so proud, sit on a seat under a tree and watch the shabby children turning somersaults and standing on their heads in the grass; take a glance at the rhododendrons beginning to break out into a blaze of colour; watch the laburnum

shaking its golden locks out in the soft warm wind; meditate on future difficulties into which to lead aristocratic feet, future depths of unspeakable bliss upon which to let the curtain drop.

A single chop and a rice-pudding in a breakfast saucer for your dinner are simple fare, but they do not preclude the needy author from telling of magnificent banquets and festivities in dazzling halls of light. In the same way, the homely and occasionally sordid details of my daily life in no way clipped the wings of my imaginings, and these flights of fancy always seemed to have fuller scope in the open air, when green boughs waved in slow and stately fashion between me and the blue sky beyond.

Yes, I would go commune with Nature, first ordering the chop and pudding to be ready an hour hence.

I would weave an intricate and exciting plot—a plot that would hold my reader breathless, and cause my editor to greet me, on my next visit to the editorial sanctum, with his blandest smile; and my heroine should be limned after the pattern of that sweet-faced, calm-eyed woman, my new neighbour.

I had chosen a delightful seat, quiet and retired, yet within earshot of children's voices and the quacking of many ducks (for we had a pond—quite a large pond, too—in our park), when, moving slowly, and in strange timid fashion, my new neighbour came along one of the side-walks.

I confess to experiencing a shock. I confess that that Pegasus, just about to soar aloft, floundered pitifully.

The Madonna-faced woman was what is called in homely parlance, a crook-back.

A simple brown bonnet was tied over her brown hair, the two nearly matching each other. Her blue eyes—wonderful eyes they were in very truth—full of a sort of pathetic pleading, as if asking all the world to be tolerant of her deformed shape and awkward, shambling gait, looked at me as she passed. I almost fancy she would have stopped and taken a place upon the bench beside me, but for the fact that she was on her way to keep an appointment. I came to this conclusion unhesitatingly, because I have learnt to read people's errands from the way they go about them, and know the look of a person on the way to a business interview off by heart.

Poor people do not wait for introductions to make each other's acquaintance. It is

one of the advantages of poverty that it is untrammelled by conventionality.

A week later I knew Hetty Deacon to speak to as we passed each other in the street; to nod to as we looked at each other from opposite windows. A month later I seemed to have known her all my life. I wondered how I had ever managed to get on without her sweet companionship—her ready sympathy.

For you never saw anyone so interested in the beautiful young countesses and wicked young dukes as Hetty was! She would laugh right merrily over the funny bits of my stories, and I'm sure I have seen her eyes quite bright and tearful over my death-bed scenes. You know people always die at great length, and very much more picturesquely on paper, than they do in real life, and I was a great hand at this sort of thing. I am a very old woman now, and an unexpected legacy has made it quite unnecessary for me to write "fiction for the million," as we called our weekly paper, so I may say that much without laying myself open to the charge of being vainglorious.

Yes, I was a good hand at the pathetic parts. I often brought the tears to my own eyes, and my voice quite faltered as I read aloud to Hetty about pale faces on white pillows, and wan hands that clasped those that fain would never let them go.

"How clever you are!" she would say: "I should never have thought of that."

Success I had had in a certain small way of my own; success that meant a due and regular supply of chops and pudding, and a cheap trip to the sea once every autumn; but this, I felt, was fame—this was incense—this was a sip out of the intoxicating cup of glory!

It was such a help to me having someone near at hand to take an interest in the webs I spun with my busy brain.

Some while back I had tried the land-lady's daughter; but the attempt was a failure. She ate surreptitious sweets while I read to her, and made nasty sucking noises over them. I caught her once, in the most thrilling part of a most thrilling story, making vulgar signs with her fingers to her younger brother through the chink of the room door. Then I gave the thing up, convinced that the higher education of the masses was a hopeless affair. But it was different, quite different, with Hetty.

And I grew to love the girl (she was but eighteen) with all my heart. There

had been black and terrible troubles in my past life. All I loved had been reft from my hold; worse still, those I trusted in most blindly had proved untrue. Mine was a sad story enough: grief and disappointment had seemed to wither me: I had made no ties, formed no friendships in these latter years. But now, I was like an old tree that suddenly sprouts out into little fresh green branches of leaves all about its hoary trunk. I let Hetty creep into my heart of hearts and nestle there.

Hetty was an artists' model.

"I only sit for the face and head, of course," she said, a faint flush rising in her cheek, as she alluded to her deformed and twisted frame; "it seems I suit for Saint Cecilia, and that sort of thing."

"So I should fancy," I answered, glancing at the beautiful spiritual face opposite to me.

"Of course, with mother to keep, it has been hard work sometimes, and the sewing for the linen-shops is a good thing to have at hand when studio work chances to be slack. I was getting very hopeless just when first we came here, though I said nothing to mother. I never do. Do you remember the morning I passed you sitting under the laburnum-tree in the park? Well, I was on my way to see an artist then."

"I knew you were on your way to see somebody; you looked like business all over."

"Yes, I daresay I did. I felt like it. I never made a better bargain than I did that day. I was afraid that I should break out singing as I came along the streets home—my heart was as glad as the lark over there at Number Ten."

"I thought so," I put in here; "I heard you singing next morning at your work."

"Patience, I think we always loved each other, even before we ever spoke to each other. I used to peep at you across the street, and then, the milk-woman told mother you were 'the lady who wrote stories;' so I peeped oftener than ever. I think I was a little frightened of you at first."

"But not now?"

"Ah, no!"

Hetty's mother was nearly blind, and yet it was wonderful how much she managed to do in the way of "settling up" their shabby little room. It was the very picture of cleanliness and tidiness. The last tenant had been a musician at one of the minor theatres, a man who devoted himself to two things in life—his violin,

and the rearing of mignonette in the box outside the window. The sun of prosperity seemed to be beginning to shine upon him, for when he left, with much pomp and ceremony he presented the painted box to the landlady, and now, full of sweet-scented greenish and yellow flowers, it flourished exceedingly under Hetty's care.

"Cousin Jack likes the smell of flowers like those," she said to me one Sunday afternoon as she and I stood together by the window. "He's coming, is Jack, this evening, and he and I are going to church together."

I am naturally rather a fluent woman, but there was something in Hetty's face—something in Hetty's voice—that held me silent, as she spoke of this expected visitor of hers.

If you have any intuitive perceptions at all, you can scarcely mistake the look in a woman's eyes, the smile on a woman's lips, as she speaks of the man she loves.

Apparently Hetty was surprised at my silence, for she gave me a quick glance, folded her hands lightly one in the other, let them fall upon her lap, and with a sort of childlike wonder in her great soft eyes, said slowly:

"Why, Patience, you never saw Cousin Jack!"

I read her heart like an open book. She pitied with all her gentle soul that benighted being who had "never seen Cousin Jack." It was difficult to her to form an idea of what the world must seem like to that person whose world did not contain Cousin Jack.

"No, I have never seen him, Hetty. May I see him to-night, dear? Will your mother give me a cup of tea, and then I can sit with her while you and Jack are at church?"

So it was settled like that. We carried over my nice fresh bunch of watercresses and my glass beehive full of marmalade, and made a sort of joint feast of it.

"He's a bonnie lad is Jack," said Mrs. Deacon before he came. "He's a sailor, you know—getting on well, too, in the merchant service. Never a voyage he comes home from but he brings me some pretty gift or another; nor he don't forget Hetty, neither. Why should he, indeed? He used to carry her about when he was a strong chap of ten years old, and she a bit weakly-like lass of five. He was handy, too, and made a go-cart—aye, that did he. 'She shall ride in her carriage like a queen!' he'd say, laughing so as

you might hear him a mile off. My poor husband was alive then, and we were well-to-do."

Here Hetty, ever watchful of her mother's moods and fancies, cried out that Jack was coming down the street, and that he had a posy in his coat. So he had; and I hardly know which was brighter and more bonnie, the young fellow's face or the posy of summer flowers at his breast.

He was a sailor every inch of him, strongly built, sunburnt, curly-locked, dark-eyed. He had a ringing happy laugh, and was fond of watercresses and marmalade; indeed, he complimented me on both articles, Mrs. Deacon having explained that they were my contributions to the entertainment.

But what struck me about him most was his marvellously tender, gentle ways to his cousin Hetty. She, on her part, seemed more silent than usual; but the beautiful Madonna face was all alight with a quiet radiance—a calm and restful joy—a look as if she were for ever saying to herself, "He is here, here beside me," like a bird singing a sweet song of content over and over again.

The cousins went to church together, and I stayed with Mrs. Deacon meanwhile; listening with quiet yet keen attention to reminiscences of bye-gone days—of Jack's boyhood—of Hetty's girlhood.

"Jack was the orphan son of Mr. Deacon's only sister, and was never grudging nothing no more than if he'd been our own," said my informant with a certain air of pride in the late Mr. Deacon's generosity towards his wife's kin.

Jack had not been unmindful of these benefits received, and when the evil days came, many a welcome bit of help did he send to his more than mother.

"Never forgetting Hetty," added Mrs. Deacon complacently. "He's main fond of Hetty, is Jack, I can tell you."

This last remark was made with a certain gentle defiance, and the dim eyes were turned to me with a sort of wistful hope that I might make some further comment. But I had none to make.

I read the mother's hopes and fears; I read my dear girl's heart; but I kept silence.

The evening was warm and still; from the far distance came the sound of church bells pealing; from somewhere near at hand, the sound of an organ and of hymn-singing. Mrs. Deacon had fallen into a doze, and as I sat there waiting for the

cousins to come home, a mist came over my eyes, something rose in my throat and tried to choke me, and a voice in my heart cried out: "Oh, Hetty, Hetty, what can I do for you—my dearie?"

The summer was at its height. In Western London the great folks were setting themselves to think where they should go for their autumn outing. We folk at the East End just had to make the best of things, and be grateful for small mercies, such as water-carts to lay the dust, and the peripatetic ice-vendor with his truck and little tumblers of lemon and strawberry.

I had got to know Cousin Jack quite well by this time. I was able to read "between the lines" in my dear girl's heart-story.

Hetty was very dear to her sailor-cousin; dear, as things weak and helpless are apt to be dear to the strong; dearer, because of her affliction; sacred, in his eyes, as a suffering child is sacred to all of us who know the beauty of tenderness and pity. Hetty was all this to her cousin Jack, but nothing more.

Of what Jack was to Hetty, I cannot speak. I dared not try to gauge it at the time. I put the thought of it from me, as we put aside a thing we dare not look upon—that is, for a time.

The day came when I had to take my courage by both hands, and face all the cruel truth; for the young sailor took a great fancy to me, though I was a little old woman with a Quakerish cap and a shabby gown. Not only so, but he opened his heart to me.

We were walking side by side in the park, where everything looked parched and dried up with the baking heat, when Jack first told me that after the voyage upon which he was just about to start, he was going to be married.

"I hope Aunt Ann and Hetty won't take it unkind that I haven't told them all about it from the first," he said doubtfully; "but, to say the truth, Miss Heath, I find it a difficult thing to tell. I want them to be quite sure that I shall never be any different to them; that I shall always be the same Cousin Jack. I am so afraid they will fancy—all kinds of things."

"I don't think they will fancy anything that is not true," I put in; perhaps with more warmth than wisdom.

"Do you mean to say you think so meanly of me as to suppose I shall forget

those two dear, gentle women, just because I have a home and a wife of my own?"

"No," I said, looking up into his brave and bonnie face—"No, you will not forget them; but, it cannot be the same—it never is."

We paced up and down and talked together a long while after this. It was dusk and grey when we went in, I to my own lonely room, Jack to supper with Mrs. Deacon and Hetty. Once alone, I sat down in the dark, untied my bonnet-strings, and flung them back, unfastened my shawl, and let it fall over my chair.

I was stifling—choking; I felt like the veriest coward that ever drew breath.

I had a task before me from which I shrank with every nerve of my poor little shrivelled body—the hardest task that had ever been set me yet: to wound cruelly the one creature I loved on earth.

And yet it must be done.

The womanly pride and self-respect of a sister-woman is dear to any woman worth the name. Jack must not tell this thing to Hetty. The girl's secret was safe so far. It should be my work to keep it so.

It was the following night. Hetty had come to pay me a visit. I had been listening to the account of a grand historical picture in which she was to figure.

I let her talk on till the room grew dim and shadowy with the coming of the summer night, which was but a picture done in greys at its deepest, and had no black shades at all.

I let its misty blue-grey veil fall on my girl's sweet face before I told my sorry tale, before I redeemed the pledge made to my own heart the night before.

She played up to my hand herself.

"You and Jack had a long talk last night, Patience."

"Yes; sit down here in this low chair by my knee while I tell you what it was all about."

Hetty was between the window and me. The perfect profile showed like a silhouette against the dusky gloom outside.

"We were talking about you!"

The silhouette was turned away from me. Hetty's voice was faint and breathless.

"About me?"

"Yes. Jack was telling me about you when you were a little girl; how he used to carry you about; how dearly he loved you."

My task was even harder than I thought it would be. I dare not touch Hetty's

hands—those meek hands—long, slender, helpful, folded in her lap, for my own were cold and trembling.

"He was very, very good to me, always."

"Yes; and I am sure he always will be. He told me last night that he felt you had a stronger, deeper claim upon a man's tenderness than any other woman could have."

"Because I am—different to other women?"

"Yes; set apart, as it were; sacred; doomed to a certain extent to stand alone in the world, without those nearer ties——"

"He meant that I ought never to marry?"

I could not see Hetty's face. I saw the folded hands clasping each other closer and closer. Once I felt a shudder shake the poor mis-shapen frame that made my dearest girl "different to other women."

Said I not rightly that my task was hard?

"Yes; he meant that your life was different to others."

"Yes; I had forgotten."

A long, deeply-drawn breath told me my arrow had gone home.

"And so, just because he holds you in such reverence, such tenderness; just because he is so ready to fear you might fancy he could change to you, it is hard for him to tell you——"

She turned her face—white in the grey ghastly light—fully towards me. Her eyes, wild, wide, full of fear, met mine. She threw up her hands as if to keep off some horrible knowledge that threatened to crush her to the earth.

All my courage, all my calmness, forsook me.

"Oh, Hetty, Hetty!" I cried, flinging my arms about her, gathering her to my breast, rocking her to and fro as one would a sick and weary child. "It is true what you think, what you fear. Oh, my darling! if I could suffer in your stead I would; but I cannot—I cannot; no one can!"

The white face lay back against my bosom. Hetty's eyes were closed. I could see the wonderful silky length of their long lashes even in that faint and feeble light.

Had the cruel blow killed her? Had I lost the one thing I loved on earth?

No; for her arms close about my neck; fast—fast and close she holds me.

Tears rain down her poor pale face; sobs choke her utterance.

It is best so; and I let her weep on.

At last she speaks:

"It must have hurt you terribly to say all this to me. You did it, I know, to save

me from myself. How good you are to me, my dear! I have been wrong; I have been selfish, thoughtless, wicked; but he grew so dear—so dear that I forgot, quite forgot that my life must be different to that of all other women for ever. See," she went on, drawing a little packet from the bosom of her dress, "this is the posy he wore that happy Sunday when he and I went to church together, and the bells rang sweetly, oh, so sweetly, and all the world about me seemed full of music."

All this happened many, many years ago.

Hetty and I live together now.

We have done so a long while; ever since Mrs. Deacon died.

Jack's marriage turned out a very happy one, and his children dote upon and tyrannise over their aunt Hetty beyond anything I ever saw.

Not only so, but their father has the same gentle, loving tenderness, the same reverential love for his old playmate—the woman who is "different from others"—as ever he had.

The withered posy still lies in a corner of Hetty's desk. I know, for I have seen it many times and oft.

It serves, I doubt not, to remind her that she once forgot—once loved but too well; and then lived her sorrow down, and took up her life as it had been ordered for her—as a brave woman should.

My tale has no plot in it after all. It is not half as full of incident as those I used to write in Paradise Place, while the hoarse dog put me out by his barking and the lark cheered me up with his song. It is only the story of one woman's heart, told by another woman who loved her dearly, and loves her dearly still.

A DINNER WITH THE PRINCE OF MONTENEGRO.

In a former article, I alluded in passing to my reception by the Prince of Montenegro.

The Prince dwells in a mountain village called Cetinje, for two hundred years or so the capital of Montenegro. Before that time, Rieca, on Lake Scutari, was the seat of government, and in a very short time now Cetinje will be discrowned. It was chosen in desperate days as the valley most difficult to reach and most defensible when attacked of all Tchernajora, but these advantages are correlated by

discomforts. The population is so scanty in those barren hills, that unskilled labour commands a very high wage, and the craftsman asks what he likes. As nothing is manufactured in the country saving linen and rough cloth, all wants of civilised existence must be supplied by importation; and the roads are frightful. To build a cottage of four rooms costs a little fortune—so modest are fortunes in Montenegro—for that terrible climate exacts very solid walls and carpentry; furniture, except the very simplest, is forbidden by expense. To move the seat of government, therefore, will cause annoyance to all those, the richest and most powerful, already established at Cetinje, as to the population who live by them. But it must and will be done very shortly. I have no doubt that the new capital is chosen, though not yet announced, and I expect it will prove to be Podgoritz, a busy town in the fertile lowlands wrested from Turkey.

Like ancient Sparta, Cetinje has no defences other than its diadem of crags and the breasts of its heroes. No Dutch hamlet could look more trim and commonplace, as one first sees it from above. But, like all things oriental, its charms do not bear inspection. The front room of each whitewashed dwelling is the stable, and the family lives in two or three tiny chambers up above. A rough street, twenty yards broad, lined with trees, feebly ends in huts and shanties and waste land, after a course of one hundred and fifty yards. A cross street, equally broad, on the right hand has a dozen little houses and an hospital to end the view; on the left, a few very unpretentious mansions of the nobility; the government offices, less pretentious still, to put the thing considerably; and the bright, sensible abode of the reigning prince. There is nothing old at Cetinje, except the monastery, palace, fort, which rises on a knoll at the left front of the town, and the round tower at some distance, where Turkish heads were exhibited, in succession never failing, until a very few years ago. Strange it is to observe that although the Montenegrins have been fighting for three centuries and more, with evident success upon the whole, the most ancient trophy of their victories dates back only a score of years. There is, indeed, a marvellous collection of flags captured in the last struggle, and at the War Office a case of military medals and decorations taken on the field, surprising in the variety and number of its

contents. The middle place is occupied by a Grand Cross of the Medijeh, taken from a general in command, whilst round it are some hundreds of smaller distinctions. Amongst the medals one sees not a few bearing the effigy of Queen Victoria, relics of the Crimean war. But no other trophies are shown, nor, in fact, do they exist, either at Cetinje or elsewhere. I am not well read in the history of Montenegro, which must be dug out of native ballads, and out of public records at Vienna, Constantinople, and Venice. Ninety-nine in a hundred people will tell you that this capital has never been occupied by the Turk. But its poverty in antique spoils is evidence to the contrary. It will be found, I believe, that Cetinje has several times been held by the Moslem, who even built mosques there, of which the memory has vanished. Within times quite recent, the Albanians occupied it for seventy days, as I understand. Besieged there by the Montenegrins, who cut off the water supply, they dug the numerous wells which excite a stranger's curiosity. When one remarks how Nature itself has fortified the place, heaping hills on hills around it, cutting ravines, enfolding every approach, one is impressed almost as deeply by the desperate courage which assailed it with success as by the heroism which so often repelled attack.

All the interest of Cetinje centres round the palace, a rather large, low building of whitewashed stone. It gives on the broad grassy street described as appropriated to Waywodes and government offices. On its left front stands the famous tree where Montenegrin sovereigns dispense high justice—the supreme court of appeal. A low wall surrounds the prince's dwelling, with an archway in the middle. A stalwart sentry keeps guard in a rough and ready manner. Military education has not taught him the mystery of saluting, and officers stroll in and out unnoticed whilst he chats with a friend, leaning on his rifle. Two strides only from the arch rise three broad steps leading to glazed doors, which a servant out of livery—in black, that is, with white tie—opens to the visitor. The hall is very low, but broad, and pretty with bright colours. Two or three servants in handsome costumes rise and bow to the visitor. At the bottom of a double flight of stairs, an aide-de-camp bids him cordial welcome, and he ascends, preceded and followed from the landing by warriors in gorgeous attire, whose exact status is not

easily determined. In the corridor stand others, evidently servants, whose glittering decorations tell of feats remarkable in a land where every man has brave deeds to boast. Some of them wear an odd combination of steel scales on chest and shoulders, which is admitted to be the survival of armour used not so very long ago.

The drawing-room to which one is introduced is airy, spacious, light of colouring on walls and furniture. The floor is parqueterie, handsome but not expensive; a tasteful chandelier hangs from the ceiling, and family portraits line the walls. Four or five officers or fellow guests are standing round, and from an inner cabinet advances a stalwart personage, soldier and prince every inch of him, to shake hands. Dressed like his retainers, he is distinguishable only by his royal decorations, mostly Russian. The face is not handsome in a sculptor's sense, but is very pleasant to look upon—bluff and determined, with frank eyes and a ready smile. His highness crops his bushy whiskers close, and shaves all his chin, which is deeply dimpled; the national fashion is to wear a moustache alone, curled like a ram's horn, but his is simply pointed. The uniform is that of his subjects, already sketched, but in studying the portrait he gave me I observe that he has a second waist-scarf, of Broussa silk, twisted above the weapon-belt. A moment after his arrival we went to dinner, which in all respects was excellent—appointments, food, service, and wine. One cannot but marvel, under the circumstances, where the money comes from. A French traveller raised a laugh, in the early years of the prince's reign, by repeating an observation of some Montenegrin Waywode. Said the chronicler: "Your crown property is large?" "Oh, yes," replied the other; "it must bring in one thousand francs a year" (forty pounds)! One has not much confidence in French travellers, and things have changed in Tchernagora as elsewhere since the Emperor Napoleon defrayed from his privy purse the cost of educating this young prince. But it is quite evident that his private fortune would not support the comfortable but not undignified state I admired, whilst the finances of the country could not support six days' charges of the army assembled at that time, much more the expense of constructing roads. There is no concealment of the fact that Russia gives an annual subsidy, but the amount must have been raised of late, or other

admirers have come forward. But when we observe the excellent use made of such money as he somehow gets, one must hope that the prince's budget will never be diminished.

Our talk, of course, began with politics and political economy. Then we talked of the prince's meditated visit to England, the only European country with which he is unacquainted. His highness received his education in France, as I have said. From Paris he went to study German at Frankfort, if I remember rightly. In the course of his travels he learned Italian, and as Russian is a semi-native tongue, it results that he can speak with almost equal ease every language of Europe, saving English. As a companion he is most agreeable, gifted with the Russian shrewdness and vivacity, but controlled by an ever-ready vigilance and sense of responsibility. His temper is extremely quick, but though unable to control its outbreak, he has learned to await a cooler moment before taking irrevocable action. At that time the Albanians were giving him much trouble abroad, and much anxiety at home. An army of them stood on Kaliman, holding the passes to Dulcigno, whilst in the towns and districts newly annexed, their kindred were arming and conspiring. No one could blame them for this, but it naturally irritated the Montenegrins. Nearly all the trading class at Cetinje is Albanian, and the prince was revolving his wrongs in mind, whilst laughing and chatting at the dinner-table. Next day more news arrived, and in a transport of anger he gave orders that every Albanian should be expelled the town. The merciless ukase raised a great outcry through Europe, but on calling upon Mr. Kirby Greene, our representative in Montenegro, I found him very tranquil. "Oh yes, I've heard the news," he said, laughing, "but there is so much firing of blank cartridge in these countries that one is not easily alarmed. We shall see!" An hour afterwards came an invitation to the palace, and Mr. Greene waited on his highness. The prince still breathed fire and flames, but when he sent for his English adviser, the fit was already passed. In truth, he had never really meant to expel the Albanians, but to order their expulsion relieved his mind.

We talked of war and sport, of bear-hunting, of horses, of fishing in Lake Scutari, of damage done by wolves, of the prince's model farm, and the princess's English cows,

of the capabilities of the country and the people. His highness is a true Montenegrin, a true mountaineer, in the frankness with which he claims any merit whereof he thinks himself possessed. I would not say brutally that he boasts, because the simplicity of his conviction that earth holds no men comparable with those whom he rules, is too genuine to be described as brag. It amuses, nevertheless. Amongst mountain people everywhere ideas run mountain-big. This part of the conversation was droll, but to repeat it would convey an impression I should be sorry to disseminate. In the drawing-room, after dinner, the tone was more serious. I transcribe the notes made that same evening of one remark. "These many years," said the prince in effect, "I have had much anxiety, but I feel easy at last. The English people have recognised us poor mountaineers, whose existence has been one struggle for four centuries. It was hard to give up the territory we had won at the cost of sacrifices and most precious blood"—he referred to the territory of Dulcigno, occupied by the Montenegrins in 1877, and surrendered after the Treaty of Berlin; "but," his highness continued, "I thought that unimportant, when by so doing I could show to Europe that my people are deserving of their confidence. Every proposal made me since I have accepted without demur. Now, it seems, we must fight again; I am ready. If the powers tell me not to fight, I obey. For England has pronounced my claims just, and she does not forget or change her mind. A few years sooner or later makes no difference to us, who have waited and struggled since the first entry of the Turk into Europe. I rely upon the plighted word of England."

But it must not be thought that his highness regards with pleasure the prospect of fighting. He said: "I may declare, for all my subjects will bear witness, that in five years' campaigning not a battery has been placed before I in person had surveyed the ground, nor has one opened fire but I was standing amongst the gunners. Many of my poor people have been killed, but their prince was beside them."

In answer to my remark, he continued: "I know it is not scientific nor prudent for the general to fight as a common soldier. But," he added, pointing to the portraits round, "there is my father, there are my uncles, descended from a line of ancestry who charged sword in hand.

Times have changed. Their manner of warfare is no longer possible. But when I meet them I shall be able to declare that I, like they, put no man in front of me; that I led my people as they did, and never followed."

There was a question I should have liked to put which afterwards I asked of Bozo Petrovitch, the cousin of his highness and commander-in-chief of the Montenegrin army.

I said to that pleasant dignitary: "Europe is shocked by the stories of mutilation which circulate after each of your victories. Do your people still take heads and cut off noses?"

General Petrovitch replied frankly: "Head-taking is a practice we have learned in years comparatively recent from the Turk"—this statement does not by any means agree with the current assertions of historians—"and mutilation is the result of our effort to introduce more humanity into the death-struggle. In former times every prisoner was put to death upon the spot. When the late prince gave orders that this should cease, the people obeyed; but they would have some trophy. Besides, a Turkish prisoner released—for we have no means of keeping them—instantly rejoins the fighting force. In this last war one officer was taken five times. If a man's nose is cut off, the wound requires some months to heal, and he is recognised a second time. But the practice is nearly abolished."

As for the frightful torturings rumoured, General Petrovitch indignantly declares there was never foundation for them. But it is circumstantially told in Constantinople that a son of the living Dervisch Pasha was flayed alive less than twenty years ago. I asked the general if he would punish severely any mutilators seized in the fighting we expected daily.

"Such are the prince's orders," he replied. "But I should disobey. It is a satisfaction to our poor fellows" [nos pauvres gens]. "I shall do my best to prevent such crimes, but I will not undertake to punish the offenders."

THE QUESTION OF CAIN.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

CHAPTER XXIII. A DESPERATE WRENCH.

WHEN, on the following day, Madame Morrison saw Helen, she found her looking very different from the weak and woe-begone creature who had appealed so suc-

cessfully to her kind heart. With the buoyancy of youth to aid the blessed sense that she was no longer desolate and forsaken, Helen had recovered hope. Since she had looked into the faces that were full of concern for her, the "lost-child like" feeling, as she had defined it, was gone. Frank had not returned, and she knew no more about him than she had known yesterday; but she was no longer alone; she was no longer at the mercy of the two women whom she regarded with dread and aversion, which were, perhaps, not reasonable, but which she could not surmount. She might think more profoundly than ever of her great trouble now, since she needed not to think so anxiously about herself. There was still a great deal of the child about Helen, notwithstanding the withering blight that had fallen upon her girlhood; she placed her hand unhesitatingly in the kind hand held out to her, and she slept that night, after Madame Morrison had tended her with motherly solicitude, as a child, who had been frightened in the cold and dark, might have slept in a well-warmed and lighted room.

Delphine was very curious about the English lady who had brought madame home at so unusual an hour; she did not know that madame had intended to make a visit, and dinner had been prepared uselessly. She had, indeed, been uneasy about madame. Helen, acting on a hint from Jane, gave Delphine no satisfaction; and that astute young woman scented danger to her own and her mother's interests from the appearance on the scene of a person of the indubitable respectability and the authoritative air of Madame Morrison. What if they were altogether wrong, and there really was a marriage, and this lady was a relative of the families on either side?

"She called her 'my dear,' I can tell you," said Delphine to her mother, "and those English do not say that to all the world. And she is coming to-morrow, early, too."

"You will hear something then," said the mother.

"I think so, indeed," said the daughter.

But Delphine reckoned without Madame Morrison, who, with her first look at her handsome insolent face, had distrusted her. And she was defeated by that lady's coolly dismissing her, and entering Helen's room unannounced. Of course the resource of listening at the door remained; but Madame Morrison was too much for her there also.

She set the door of the bedroom, which opened into the little salon, wide open, and shut the opposite door which opened into the vestibule.

Delphine might listen there as long as she liked, she would be none the wiser.

"You are a good girl to have done what I told you, and I am glad to see you looking so much better this morning," said Madame Morrison, as she took a seat by the side of Helen's bed, and laid her hand gently on her head. "You are quite yourself again. No headache?"

"I am perfectly well; and, oh, it is so kind of you to come to me."

"But you would rather have seen Jane! That is natural, but I have much to say to you that Jane could not say, and you shall have her with you by-and-by. And now, my dear, for we have no time to lose, tell me, have you thought about what you are going to do?"

"I am always thinking about that; but I cannot come to any decision." The frightened look came into her face again, and tears rushed to her eyes. "Oh, Madame Morrison, what is to become of me?"

"Nothing evil, be sure of that. You are perfectly safe from harm, if you only will to be safe. My husband and I will protect you, and take care of you, if you will allow us to do so; no misfortune can befall you unless it be of your own making."

"I don't understand you; I know that all you are saying is good and kind, and I feel sheltered and protected by the mere sight of you; but I don't know what you mean by misfortune of my own making. I have done very wrong, I am afraid, to call myself Madame Lisle, and to say that I am married. It was to have been for a week only. I know now, by all I have suffered, by the shame and the misery, what a falsehood for an hour, or a moment, is; but Jane and you will forgive me, will you not?"

"Indeed we will, and do," said Madame Morrison, whose heart beat painfully as the tearful, childlike grey eyes gazed at her pleadingly with a dreadful look of wistful innocence; "but I must make you understand me, however great the pain I shall have to give you; and to do so I must tell you your own story, not as you fancy it to be, but as it is in hard fact, and as the world would read and judge it. You are the dupe—you have had a

frightfully narrow escape of being the victim, of a villain."

"Frank!" exclaimed Helen, starting up wildly.

"Yes." Madame Morrison laid her gently back on the pillow, and held one of her hands tightly. "I must say that word. You cannot imagine the degradation and misery of the fate which he destined for you when he took you away, with a devilish duplicity and cunning, from your only protector, the friend to whom your dead father had confided you, and isolated you from all help and rescue."

"No, no; it was not so. I have told you we were to have been married in a week!"

"He told you so, and you believed him, because he had made you love him, and trust him, and because you knew nothing of the world or of real life at all. How should you know that no man places the woman he means to marry in a position of disadvantage before the world, or lowers her in his own, or her own respect? How should you know that his sympathy with your unhappiness was a device to lead you into the profoundest misery, and his proposal to rescue you from an uncongenial home was a lure to hopeless and irremediable ruin? If he had been honest in either, he would have gone boldly to your protectors, told them how he had met you by an accident, and what had come of it, and——"

"It was on account of his friend," said Helen in feeble terrified protest; for were not her fears, her voiceless, half-formed fears finding utterance by the mouth of this good and sensible woman? Her stricken heart quailed under the terrible verification; but she tried to make a little fight still.

"His friend?" repeated Madame Morrison indignantly. "His friend? My child, no man of honour lets the possible interest or convenience of a friend outweigh the honour, the good name, the safety of his future wife; and the friend who would expect or wish him to do so must be a poltroon. Besides, what do you know about himself? Who is he? What is he?"

"He is a painter."

"He told you so, but what evidence have you that it is true? Did you ever see a picture of his painting? Is there one here? He is much more likely to be a mere dissolute idler, unhappily cursed

with the means of gratifying his passions and his vices, and he probably assumed the character of an artist to make himself more interesting in your innocent eyes."

"He said we should not be rich," faltered Helen, "and it was on business he went away. If he had had a fortune, and could do as he liked, why should he have left me?"

This pertinent remark commended itself to the good sense of Madame Morrison.

"You are right," she said. "He is not a rich man, and he may be what he assumes to be. Did he never tell you anything more distinct about his affairs?"

"He said he could place me here, and arrange about our marriage, because he had had a stroke of luck, and he talked of something I did not understand—of the 'veine' and the 'déveine'; that was all."

"A gambler! That is the explanation," thought Madame Morrison. "But it is useless to tell her so; she would not understand the deadly meaning of the word." Then she continued: "Only the innocent child you are could have been tricked with so weak a fable about himself and his friend as that which this bad man invented. Only a heartless villain could have tempted and deceived you through your sacred love and reverence for your dead father. Well he knew the chord to strike, and with a remorseless hand he brought out that sweet music of memory and piety to be your death-dirge. My dear, it is written 'Thou shalt not seethe the kid in the mother's milk,' but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel, and you have fallen into the hands of the wicked. How were you to know, supposing he had returned at the appointed time, and chosen, for the sake of still deluding you for a little longer, to go through some form of marriage with you, whether it would have any meaning or value? How were you to establish any claim upon him?"

"He loved me—he loved me!" said Helen amid her sobs.

"Aye, poor child, with the evil love of a false, wicked, and selfish man, who in reality loves himself only, and who would leave you, and as many like you as might take his fancy, to remorse, and shame, and misery, and, it might be, to eternal death, without a pang of the conscience that his vices have killed within him. How should you know what love of that accursed kind means?"

"Oh, don't, don't!" said poor Helen. "I thought papa had sent him to me."

"Heaven forgive him!" Madame Morrison wiped the tears from Helen's cheeks—they were pale enough now—and kissed her fervently. "He has an awful sin to answer for, wherever he may be."

"Do you think he is dead?" asked Helen faintly.

"No, I do not. There would be some record found, there would be some clue that would direct enquiry in this direction, if he were dead. I do not pretend to be able to make any attempt at solving the problem of his absence and his silence; but there is no doubt that it is nothing short of a miraculous interposition in your favour. It has saved you from sin, and shame, and misery. You have suffered much, and there is still much for you to suffer; but none of these things. The Divine mercy has been stronger than the enemy. And now, my child, you must respond to this action of Providence; you must recognise the full truth, and do your own part towards completing your own rescue."

"What must I do?" asked Helen, shrinking as if from an impending blow.

"You must leave this place at once."

"Leave this place! And not see him if he comes back—you said you do not believe that he is dead—and not know——"

"Yes, my poor child, even so."

"Oh, I could not, I could not! Frank! Frank!"

That cry wrung the heart of the listener. She had compared her task, not inaptly, to that of the surgeon who has to save his patient's life at the cost of inflicting terrible pain, and on whose nerve and steadiness the result depends. There was a strong pull upon her nerve and steadiness now.

"Don't think that I do not know what you suffer, and that I do not feel for you; but this must be, my dear. This wicked man has first deceived and then forsaken you, for even though circumstances had rendered his return impossible, nothing should have prevented his writing to you. You must place yourself beyond his reach. You understand his conduct now; you are blind no longer, but see; you could not plead ignorance or innocence as an excuse for wrong-doing now; you have your position to redeem, your good name to save, and, what is of far more real importance, your duty to do."

"What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?"

"I will tell you, and Jane and I will help you to do what is right. You must come home with me. You remember that Jane asked you to do so before the brighter prospect of the protection of Mr. and Mrs. Townley Gore offered itself."

"I was so miserable with them, Madame Morrison, I could not bear it, and so uncared for."

"Had you not been miserable and uncared for, no such design as this wicked man's could have been carried out. You need not assure me on that point. Let me go on. The same offer that I made to you then, I now renew; you shall live with us as long as you like, and either learn my business, or I will endeavour to find you suitable employment. There need be no hurry about that; you will need long rest and good care to recover from this painful episode in your life, and it will be my good niece's greatest happiness to have you with her. Her love of you has never failed or faltered."

"I know that. I saw it in her face before I fainted. But," and here, in spite of Madame Morrison's soothing hand, Helen sat up, and pushed her hair feverishly off her forehead, "suppose I did go home with you, and that Frank came back, and that it had not been so bad after all? Suppose he had really meant what he said, and that he could explain, what should I do then?"

Madame Morrison did not make an immediate reply; perhaps she found it difficult to repress a movement of impatience at the girl's folly and obstinacy; but she remembered "the precious ointment that breaks not the head," and she applied it with a skilful touch.

"My dear," she said, "what you should then do is this. You should give Mr. Lisle the opportunity of proving that he had been only thoughtless and imprudent, but not wicked in his conduct to you, by obliging him to take, in that case, the course which he ought to have taken at first. You should give him no clue by which to find you, unless by making application to the protectors of whom he has deprived you."

"But they believe that I am with Jane!"

"Indeed! Was that another device of this honest gentleman's?"

Helen hung her head, shame-faced. She was beginning to see it all now. She was beginning to be amazed at her own blindness and weakness.

"It was to be a deception only for a few days."

"Does he know who Jane is, and where she lives?"

"I don't know; I don't remember. It was all so hurried; I did tell him, I think, when Mrs. Townley Gore refused to allow me to visit Jane; but I could not say positively. Why do you ask?"

"Because he must not see you while you are with me, no matter how good a story he may make out for himself. The facts in this case are among the most stubborn within my knowledge, and I shall deal with the facts. If he should return, and wish to find you, he will know that he can do so by addressing himself to Mr. Townley Gore, and the fiction about his friend will soon disappear before any honest intention, or the worthy love of you, if such exists in him. If there's a spark of good in him, if there's any reasonable explanation to be given of his conduct, he will not be afraid to confront the woman whose unkindness put you in his power, and to ask her what has become of you? Let her tell him; and let him seek you then. You will be safe, and beyond his reach, in the sense of your ruin and dishonour; if you can trust him, there will be none to forbid you. But you must see, my dear child, that there is no other way by which we can undo the wrong that he has done you, and prove that you have judged him more correctly than I."

"I see it. I thank you. I will obey you."

Madame Morrison had to steel herself against the heart-broken tone in the young voice; the surgeon's work was almost done.

"Now, tell me about this woman who waits on you, and about your money matters."

Helen told her what arrangements had been made, and Madame Morrison investigated the condition of the money-drawer.

"Fifty francs between her and destitution," she said to herself. "Is this all the money you have anywhere?"

"I have five francs in my purse, but the last bills are not paid, and they will come to more than there is."

"I will see to all that. Do not trouble yourself on that score. Up to what date has this apartment been paid for?"

Helen told her.

"Three weeks between her and homelessness," said Madame Morrison to herself.

"And this girl, this Delphine, are her wages paid?"

"I do not know; I think they must be, or she would have demanded them, for she knows my money is nearly gone."

"That accounts for her insolence. What else does she know?"

Helen's face flushed deeply as she replied by telling Madame Morrison that Delphine had recognised her, and that she feared she did not believe her to be Madame Lisle.

"This woman is dangerous," said Madame Morrison, after listening attentively to Helen's account of the matter, and asking her several questions; "she must know nothing more about you. Can you let me see the accounts with which these people have furnished you? They are dishonest, I conclude?"

"Yes, they are," said Helen, humbly and resignedly. She was ashamed to confess the cowardice to which her false position had reduced her; but there was no need for her to confess it; the sympathy of Madame Morrison was of that quality which goes to the root of the matter. "The papers are in the drawer."

"Will you dress yourself while I look over them, and transact a little business with this girl and her mother, in the salon? And will you then come to me there? I cannot stay much longer."

Madame Morrison gathered up the papers and left the room. She well knew to what agonies she was leaving her patient, but the worst was over, the surgeon's work was done, the healer's was to be done now. "That will begin," thought Madame Morrison, "with the restoration to wholesome companionship, and a homelike life. What wretches the poor child has encountered!"

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